



CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the *Climate Change Action List*.

See also the Ecologically Sustainable Development Policy.

The Public Health Association of Australia notes that:

1. There is substantial evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that Earth's climate is changing as a result of human activity.
2. These climate changes are expected to have a range of effects on human health that will be, on balance, adverse.
3. Reducing the total level of greenhouse gas emissions is a primary preventive health strategy.
4. Actions are urgently required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to minimise the risk of catastrophic climate change.
5. Action is urgently needed to develop regionally based adaptations to the inevitable environmental change already built into the climate system, and the potential health and social impacts this will cause.
6. The Australian Government has taken a leadership role domestically and internationally in taking action to address global warming.
7. In the current situation, when society wide change is urgently necessary for the common good, government's role is to lead, inform, regulate, monitor and if necessary enforce.

The Public Health Association of Australia affirms the following:

8. Australia's obligation to equitably participate in all international arrangements to mitigate and adapt to global warming.
9. Equity between generations: the right of future people to a world as diverse and habitable as today.
10. The more vulnerable groups in society should receive equitable help with adaptation measures.

11. The historical beneficiaries of the industry giving rise to greenhouse gas emissions should lead mitigation measures.
12. The principle that producers of pollution should pay the costs of cleanup.
13. The accounting of business costs of goods and services should reflect the hidden environmental costs of production, transport and disposal.
14. Action to address climate change needs to accord with the scientific evidence available at the time, for the common good rather than sectional interests.

The Public Health Association of Australia resolves that it will:

15. Support all measures that reduce the production of greenhouse gases, promote energy saving, and minimise the health impacts of global warming.
16. Encourage members and others to reduce fossil fuel consumption, and to use their influence to extend this behaviour more broadly (e.g. within their workplaces and homes).
17. Work to reduce fossil fuel consumption among the broader society by:
 - increasing the awareness of the health sector and general community about the health, environmental, and social impacts of climate change; and
 - stimulating debate about changing social systems to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.
18. Promote at every opportunity the urgency of beginning to act for mitigation and adaptation.

The PHAA will particularly focus on activities outlined in the PHAA Climate Change Action List.

ADOPTED 2004, REVISED AND RE-ENDORSED 2008

***First adopted at the PHAA Annual General Meeting held 9 October 2004.
Reaffirmed with minor changes in 2008.***



PHAA CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION LIST

This Action List should be read in conjunction with the *Climate Change Policy*. The Public Health Association of Australia will focus on the following activities:

Energy Efficiency

PHAA will advocate to governments, business and the community for immediate reduction in energy demand and adoption of currently existing energy efficiency measures.

Transport

1. The PHAA, through SIGs and Executive, will advocate for improvement in the fuel efficiency of all transport vehicles, and the introduction of policies to minimise private vehicle use and promote public transport, bicycling and walking.

Renewable energy policy

2. The PHAA will advocate to governments, industry and the community about the urgency needed to switch energy supply to renewable energy sources.

Targets

3. PHAA executive and EHSIG will advocate to the Australian Government that the targets set for emission reductions are based firmly on the scientific evidence as it emerges over time.

International Arrangements

4. The PHAA will advocate for continued strong Australian involvement in developing and implementing UNFCCC arrangements which follow on from the Kyoto Protocol.
5. The PHAA will advocate via the World Federation of Public Health Associations for the adoption of green house gas emission targets in the USA and other high greenhouse gas production countries where these have not adopted the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

Carbon economy

6. PHAA will advocate governments, industry, other professional associations and the community to explore ways to reduce fossil fuel dependence and carbon emissions, including: (i) a mechanism for replacing income tax with carbon user charges, and (ii) changing building codes so that energy-efficient design principles and solar orientation are required, mandating solar hot water (where practicable), and encouraging use of gas for cooking and heating in preference to coal-fired electricity.

Adaptation measures

7. Given the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and predicted future increases, adverse climatic stressors are inevitable. It is prudent for PHAA to support the development of adaptive planning and policy strategies through community based workshops and seminars and the provision of fact sheets and appropriate links on the PHAA website.

Research

8. PHAA will advocate for an increase in climate change risk assessment, research into climate and disease relationships, identification of vulnerable groups, public education about possible impacts, and planning regarding the infrastructure needed to minimise the health effects of global warming in Australia.

The Public Health Association of Australia calls upon the Australian Government to:

9. Work to meet or improve on Australia's Kyoto Protocol targets.
10. Continue its active leadership role in developing and later implementing international UNFCCC post Kyoto arrangements.
11. Support renewable energy through ensuring competitive prices to fossil fuel power.
12. Commit to much greater investment in renewable energy industry research and development.
13. Fund major work relating to reduced energy consumption within the health sector, auspiced by AHMAC.
14. Abolish the Fringe Benefit Tax rules that inadvertently promote excessive motor vehicle use (i.e. the sliding scale that provides lower rates of FBT when higher kilometres are travelled).
15. Create tax incentives that favour the use of public transport and bicycles by employees through enabling employer claims for tax deductions on outlays that purchase public transport for employees, and examine FBT rules in relation to provision of car parking by employers.

16. Abolish GST on public transport.
17. Raise fuel efficiency standards for all new and used vehicles (and fund the enforcement of these standards).
18. Remove current tax advantages for imported four-wheel drive vehicles as “goods-carrying vehicles”, as they are less efficient in fuel use than lighter vehicles (diesel engines also emit more polluting particulate emissions, and cause more severe injuries in collisions with other cars).
19. Introduce a rational system of carbon user charges that better address the public health and environmental externalities of fossil fuel use.
20. Consider increasing public acceptability of carbon user charges by:
 - using the revenue gained to fund energy efficiency initiatives such as improved public transport;
 - better educating the public about the current and potential adverse impacts of the use of fossil fuels; and
 - ensuring that the actual charges (when introduced) are not initially high in absolute terms.
21. Provide greater funding for research into energy efficiency in the Australian context.
22. Given that greenhouse gas emissions will continue to influence climate for several hundred years, invest in greater research effort towards how humans can adapt to climate change, as a secondary prevention strategy.

The Public Health Association of Australia calls upon State / Territory Governments to:

23. Implement energy efficiency regulations.
24. Stop the development of new coal-fired power stations unless fitted from the outset with reliably functioning carbon capture and storage equipment.
25. Improve public transport options. Further subsidies for public transport should be considered where this is efficient (e.g., where such services reduce air pollution and fossil fuel as well as time wasted due to traffic congestion in urban settings).
26. Promote cycling and walking through infrastructure provision such as appropriate cycle ways and paths (with the added benefit of reducing population obesity).
27. Mandate minimum standards of fuel efficiency in the government vehicle fleet.
28. Lead the way in low-fuel vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles through expanding these components of the government vehicle fleet.

29. Make government-owned buildings and housing stock more energy efficient through regulations and economic incentives.
30. End clear-felling deforestation practices that release more carbon into the atmosphere and reduce the level of carbon sinks. The current clear felling of old-growth forest in Tasmania is an extreme example.

The Public Health Association of Australia will monitor progress of the International Climate Change Taskforce, and use the results to advocate implementation of the Taskforce's recommendations to the Australian government.

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